

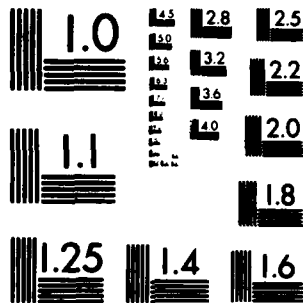
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7 DECEMBER 1981

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**SOVIET CONSTRAINTS IN SOUTHWEST ASIA:
A MILITARY ANALYSIS**



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**STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania**

**SOVIET CONSTRAINTS IN SOUTHWEST ASIA:
A MILITARY ANALYSIS**

by

Keith A. Dunn

7 December 1981

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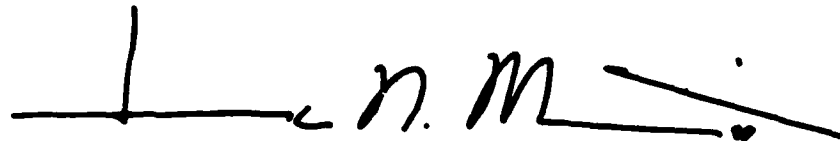
FOREWORD

This memorandum evolved from the Military Policy Symposium on "US Strategic Interests in Southwest Asia: A Long-Term Commitment?" which was sponsored by the Strategic Studies Institute in October 1981. During the symposium, academic and government experts discussed a number of issues concerning this area which will have a continuing impact on US strategy.

This memorandum considers one of these issues. The author discusses the major military constraints confronting a Soviet military planner in Southwest Asia. Some of the factors analyzed are geography, distance, a lack of Soviet friends and allies in the area, and Soviet force structure constraints.

The Strategic Issues Research Memoranda program of the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, provides a means for timely dissemination of analytical papers which are not constrained by format or conformity with institutional policy. These memoranda are prepared on subjects of current importance in areas related to the author's professional work.

This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



JACK N. MERRITT
Major General, USA
Commandant

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

DR. KEITH A. DUNN joined the Strategic Studies Institute as a civilian in the summer of 1977. Prior to that time he was an Army intelligence officer. Dr. Dunn earned a master's degree and doctorate from the University of Missouri-Columbia in American diplomatic relations. He has contributed chapters to several books on Soviet foreign and defense policy and his articles have appeared in various professional journals including *Orbis*, *Naval War College Review*, *Parameters*, *Journal of the Royal United States Institute for Defense Studies*, and *Military Review*.

SUMMARY

In Southwest Asia, the Soviet Union has many advantages vis-a-vis the United States. First, Soviet proximity to the region means that Moscow does not worry about having to establish a presence in the region to demonstrate its interest in regional events. The Soviet Union is ever present. Even before the invasion of Afghanistan, Moscow cast a long political shadow over the region which threatened to politically neutralize or politically frighten regional nations into inaction. Second, the political instability and regional military rivalries that are endemic to the region not only threaten the status quo which is adverse to US interests but also provide the USSR with opportunities to exploit. Third, existing regional rivalries (e.g., the Arab-Israeli dispute) provide the USSR an important means of obtaining access in the region.

Despite these advantages, the Soviet Union does face numerous constraints. A major problem of many recent Western assessments of the threat to Southwest Asia is that there have been relatively few attempts to examine in any systematic fashion the constraints facing the USSR. This is the purpose of this paper. It examines in a military context the factors which would constrain Soviet military operations in the area. The major constraints examined are: the manner in which the Soviet Union has built its forces and how its force structure limits Soviet power projection capabilities; the impact of geography and weather upon armor-heavy military operations; the effect of distance consideration in Southwest Asia, given the performance capabilities of Soviet military equipment; and the political risks Moscow would have to expect if it initiates military operations in the midrange.

From the analysis of these constraints, the author presents six policy-oriented conclusions. First, and most important, the Soviet Union faces a variety of constraints that impinge upon its military capabilities. While this seems so self-evident that it may not need to be mentioned, enough current assessments do not take this into consideration that it must be highlighted. Second, there is a need for policymakers and analysts to disabuse themselves of worst case scenarios and recognize US advantages. Third, given the low readiness status of Soviet ground forces in the region, we need to recognize that strategic warning will exist prior to any conflict in Southwest Asia. Fourth, the primary objective of US strategy for

Southwest Asia must be deterrence. To fight to defend oil inherently means that not only will disruption occur but also it will be some time before the flow of oil will resume, even if the United States and its Arab partners would "win." Fifth, many of the force structure and specific military equipment constraints which limit Soviet power projection capabilities can be solved. However, they cannot be eliminated overnight, and, as a result, the United States has some leadtime to offset them. Finally, the main constraint upon the Soviet Union in Southwest Asia is political. It is a lack of friends and allies; a lack of assured access to facilities; and a general dislike and distrust for not only the USSR but also the Communist system. Therefore, the primary US response to the Soviet threat must continue to be essentially political, bolstered by military capabilities and not vice versa.

SOVIET CONSTRAINTS IN SOUTHWEST ASIA: A MILITARY ANALYSIS

Since the fall of the Shah of Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, US attention has focused more sharply on the volatile and politically unstable region of Southwest Asia than at any time in the past.¹ Because of enhanced threat perceptions and a recognition of significant political and military limitations in the area, American policymakers and military strategists have become preoccupied with seeking new alternatives to improve the US defense posture in the region.

Over the last two years, a variety of actions have been initiated. The Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) has been established, and its focus, originally worldwide, has been limited to Southwest Asia. For all practical purposes, the RDJTF might as well be called the "Joint Task Force for Southwest Asia." The Reagan Administration has decided to create a separate unified command for the area. Announcing its intention to reverse the Carter Administration arms sales policy, the Reagan Administration is much more willing to provide sophisticated arms not only to friendly Southwest Asian nations but also to other regional states. For example, the Reagan Administration has significantly expanded the military aid packages offered to Saudi

Arabia and Pakistan. The administration has also continued earlier efforts to negotiate improved access to military facilities in the region. Some administration officials have even expressed an interest in placing US ground forces in some parts of the region. Suffice it to say, in the last two years the region has captured the attention and sensitivity of US policymakers. Planning for a Southwest Asian "contingency" now consumes a major portion of defense analysts' time and energy.

Numerous analyses detail the constraints facing the United States in Southwest Asia and the inadequacies of US military capabilities.² Right or wrong, the "Carter Doctrine," which claimed the United States would use unilateral military force to defend its vital interests in the region, and the RDJTF have received the most attention. The former has often been ridiculed as a doctrine or strategy without the forces to support it. Often, in casual conversation, the RDJTF has been referred to as a force "which would get there the latest with the least." Jeffrey Record is even more critical and has argued that "the RDF is a fatally flawed military instrument for military intervention . . ." and is an "invitation to military disaster" Without getting into a lengthy discussion of US strategy or forces for Southwest Asia, it is clear that, with a few notable exceptions, one common thread runs through much of the writings on Southwest Asia: for the United States to be "successful" (however that is defined) it must counter unilateral Soviet advantages in the region.⁴

Unfortunately, there have been relatively few attempts to examine in any systematic fashion the constraints that the Soviet Union does face in the region. This is the purpose of this paper. It will examine in a military context the factors that limit and constrain Soviet options in Southwest Asia during the coming decade.⁵ However, before turning to the primary focus of this paper, it is necessary briefly to discuss Soviet advantages and objectives to set the stage for an analysis of constraints.

Soviet Advantages. The most obvious and often cited Soviet advantage in Southwest Asia is proximity. The USSR is nearer to the entire region than is the United States and it is contiguous to major parts of the region (i.e., Afghanistan and Iran). In a military context these geographic asymmetries confer particular advantages. The Soviet response time to crises should be quicker. Moscow can alter the readiness status of its forces in the area either

to signal displeasure with events in the region or to show intent. In the event of conflict, Soviet pilots would have to fly shorter distances. Soviet resupply lines would be shorter. In addition, depending on the particular military scenario, proximity would provide the Soviet Union the opportunity to play its strongest military card—land-based power.

Because of its proximity, the USSR does not have to worry about presence to show its interest in or commitment to the region, unlike the United States. As Shahram Chubin has argued, "Geography provides the Soviet Union with a permanent presence that the West can match only with great difficulty." Even before the invasion of Afghanistan, the Soviet Union cast a long political shadow over the region. Soviet presence may not lead to direct influence over the foreign and domestic policies that Southwest Asian nations pursue. Nevertheless, its ever present nature; the fact that geography means that it can never just pack its bags and go home; or, as Chubin has said, "it is in the region and unable to get out" means that regional nations must shape their policies and actions with an eye always over their shoulder toward their northern neighbor.⁶ The primary risk from an American perspective is that the region may become politically neutralized or frightened into inaction because of the USSR's proximity.

Political instability and regional military rivalries that are endemic to Southwest Asia provide the Soviets with two additional advantages. First, given Moscow's overall limited political and economic influence in the area, changes to the status quo have a better chance to redound to its, rather than the United States', favor. The indigenously sparked Iranian Revolution and the internal political chaos that has torn Iran apart since 1978 are classic examples of how Moscow can achieve indirect benefits from events it neither initiated nor controlled. The fall of the Shah of Iran and Washington's loss of its privileged position in Teheran totally destroyed the "two-pillar strategy" and left the United States politically and militarily vulnerable in the area. In other words, there are obvious advantages of being a nonstatus quo power in regions of the world where the status quo is always in jeopardy. In addition, Moscow's primary tool for gaining access to many nations in the region is its military power, particularly arms sales. Without the existing regional rivalries, the USSR would lack its most important means of access. While the Soviet experience in

Iraq indicates that this lever is not as strong as the Soviets would like, Soviet influence would be even more circumscribed without it than it is now.⁷

The unresolved Arab-Israeli issue is also a plus for the Soviet Union. While most Southwest Asian nations are not directly concerned with this issue, the nations most affected—Saudi Arabia and Iraq—just happen to be the two most politically and militarily powerful nations in the region. Strong US support for Israel, which many Arabs believe is out of proportion to America's "true interests" in the region, is an irritant to US-Saudi relations. The Arab-Israeli conflict provides the radical Arab states with a rallying cause. It also threatens the political stability of Saudi Arabia by exposing the royal family to criticism and additional "Mecca incidents" from radical elements within and outside Saudi Arabia. More importantly, the Arab-Israeli issue provides the Soviets with some opportunities to use the issue as an opening or entering wedge in some nations.

Soviet Objectives. Four major objectives appear to have motivated Soviet policy toward the region. First, Moscow is interested in preserving the security of its southern borders. Optimally, the USSR would prefer that its contiguous neighbors be politically and ideologically subservient. In Iran during 1946 and Afghanistan since 1979 Moscow took direct military actions to defend this objective. At a minimum, the Soviets are intent upon maintaining a favorable military balance in the region to ensure that no single regional state or combination of states can threaten Soviet territorial integrity.

Second, the Soviets want to reduce US and Western influence and maximize their own influence in the region. Since it has not always been practical or feasible totally to eliminate US presence in the area, Herman Eilts has argued that Moscow has accepted the "neutralization of the pervasive American presence in the area" as an intermediate objective.⁸ Ultimately, however, the Soviets would like to see Asia—stretching from Southwest Asia to East Asia and the Pacific—divested of any direct security relationships with the United States and replaced by Moscow's traditional call for a system of "Collective Security in Asia" in which the USSR would play the predominant role.

Third, the Soviet Union as part of its global competition with China wants to limit, reduce, and contain Chinese influence in

Southwest Asia. One of the many justifications that Moscow has given for its invasion of Afghanistan was Chinese support of "counterrevolutionary Afghan elements." A Soviet installed Afghan government precluded any possibility that Chinese influence via its Pakistan connection would develop in Afghanistan.⁹

Fourth, the Soviets want to be accepted as a superpower with legitimate interests and rights that are recognized and accepted not only in Southwest Asia but also throughout the world.¹⁰ Moscow believes that as a global power it has the right to participate in decisions that shape events in other parts of the world, particularly those events that are near to or threaten its primary security interests. Historically, all other world powers have played such a role; since World War II, Moscow has increasingly emphasized this as a legitimate right. While we do not necessarily have to accept this assertion as fact, we must recognize that such a Soviet presumption exists if we want to shape policies that have a reasonable chance of success.¹¹

ASSESSING THE MILITARY FACTORS

In the Soviet view, military factors play an important role in the attainment of its objectives. Soviet leaders correctly perceive that military strength is the foundation of the USSR's status as a global power. In fact, it is Moscow's only superpower attribute. The Soviets believe that the attainment of strategic nuclear parity, the third realignment of the "international correlation of forces," has reduced the possibility of US military intervention in areas of the Third World and forced the United States to deal with the Soviets on a more equal political and military basis.¹² Soviet leaders believe that the growth of their total military power has permitted them to pursue a more active role in the world and to expand Soviet influence. They see military strength as a critical element not only for expanding Soviet influence in the future, but also for consolidating present and past gains.

Since it is unlikely that any major domestic economic breakthroughs will occur in the 1980's to improve the Soviet Union's status as an economic global power, military strength should remain the crucial element of Soviet international status. This does not necessarily mean that Soviet forces are poised ready

to attack. In fact, most observers agree that a Soviet military attack against a Southwest Asian nation is probably the least likely scenario for regional destabilization during the next decade. Even those who believe the Soviets to be compelled by some grand design or who explain the invasion of Afghanistan as part of a larger Soviet move toward oil or warm water ports recognize that more probable scenarios for conflict exist. Some of the more likely threats to the region's stability are: coups and overthrow of existing governments by internal forces; political instability and disorder within regimes that are conservative and monarchical; civil disturbances that could include terrorist, hostile leftist, or Islamic fundamentalist attacks against established governments; and revival of traditional regional conflicts (e.g., Saudi Arabia versus People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY); PDRY versus Yemen Arab Republic (YAR); Oman versus PDRY and/or YAR; another Iran-Iraq war; or Pakistan versus India). Nevertheless, because of Soviet proximity to the region, and given the USSR's perception that military factors are important for achieving its objectives, a direct Soviet military threat against the region cannot be disregarded "because the consequences, even of its occurrence, let alone its success, would be very dangerous" ¹³ With this in mind, we need to examine the available Soviet forces and to assess the factors constraining their use.

Ground Forces. There are two particularly striking features about the Soviet army which are most pertinent to our discussion of Soviet capabilities in Southwest Asia. The first is the size of the Soviet ground forces, which comprise slightly over 1.8 million soldiers in the Red Army. They are organized into more than 180 tank, motorized rifle, and airborne divisions. For a Southwest Asia contingency the immediately available forces that the Kremlin could draw upon are the 25 divisions located in the North Caucasus, Transcaucasus and Turkestan military districts. Most of the remaining divisions are Category III and would require significant inputs of men and trucks from the civilian economy before they could be committed to combat. Category III divisions are authorized manning at below 50 percent of wartime strength. However, if one assumes that on any given day most Category III divisions are manned between 25-33 percent, the Soviets would have to mobilize approximately 200,000 reservists to bring all of its divisions in the region up to strength. This is not a worst case

assessment. John Collins has suggested that some Soviet Category III divisions are manned at only 10 percent.¹⁴ However, since it is impossible to determine from unclassified sources if any of the 10 percent manned divisions are found in the Southern Military Districts, the manning levels of 25-33 percent were used for assessments in this paper. These figures suggest the magnitude of the problem facing the USSR. Soviet difficulties would be even more significant if manning levels were nearer to 10 percent than 25-33 percent.¹⁵

In sum, the readiness status of Soviet ground forces in the immediate vicinity of Southwest Asia suggests that a "no notice attack" or "bolt from the blue" scenario probably is not a feasible Soviet military alternative. In other words, American forces would have some strategic warning of Soviet military actions in the region. How much time the Soviets would need to mobilize Category III forces and when the United States would react to strategic warning would play an important role in determining the number and types of forces that the United States and other regional states could have available to deter an imminent attack or fight once a cross border aggression began.

The second most obvious and striking feature of Soviet forces is the near total mechanization of the Soviet army. The entire ground force system, from type of equipment procured to tactics and logistics, has been optimized around the concepts of shock, mobility, and ending a conflict as rapidly as possible. The Soviet army has always placed more emphasis on the "tooth" portion of the "tooth-to-tail" ratio than has the United States. Logistical support units are kept to a minimum in the Soviet army. If a piece of equipment cannot be rapidly repaired in the field, it is replaced rather than evacuated to be rebuilt in a depot facility. If a unit suffers losses to the degree that it is no longer combat effective, the entire unit will be replaced by a fresh, fully manned unit. The only "light" forces available to a Soviet planner are the seven active airborne divisions. However, by some definitions, even these divisions are not "light" since they have more than 300 organic armored vehicles.

Essentially, the Soviet Union has designed its ground forces with a European/NATO war in mind. The heavy emphasis on armored forces and the tactics associated with combined arms teams have been optimized for a European continental land battle with a high

potential to escalate to nuclear war. Soviet emphasis upon speed, mobility, preemption, unit replacement, limited organic logistical support, a large mobilizable reserve to augment understrength divisions, and a preponderance of armored and mechanized units are military attributes tailored for a certain type of Eurasian land battle. As will be discussed further, some attributes of this type of force structure can be effectively used in certain Southwest Asian contingencies (e.g., areas contiguous to the USSR). However, geography and distance factors, as well as the fact that large parts of Southwest Asia are noncontiguous to the Soviet Union, act as constraints upon the effective use of armor heavy forces in other Southwest Asian contingencies.

Tactical Air Support. Frontal Aviation (FA) is the tactical air element of the Soviet armed forces, and is responsible for supporting ground forces through air and air-to-ground operations. There is one tactical air army in Turkestan and one in the Transcaucasus military district. They could initially provide between 450-600 aircraft to support a Soviet military operation in Southwest Asia. What mix of FA aircraft would be available is unclear from unclassified sources. However, since approximately three-fourths of Soviet FA assets are deployed against NATO and these units receive the most modern aircraft, it is safe to assume that the Turkestan and Transcaucasus military districts do not receive large inventories of the most modern FA aircraft. Nevertheless, FA assets inside the Soviet Union can be redeployed between units if the need arises. Therefore, the following analysis of static indicators assumes that some of the most modern FA aircraft would be used during a Southwest Asian conflict. FA inventories could be augmented with medium range bombers from the Soviet Long-Range Air Forces. Table I indicates the tactical radii and load capacity of the most probable tactical aircraft and medium bombers that could be used to support military operations.

The Soviets have introduced more modern fighter aircraft into the FA inventory over the last decade, and these aircraft have increased range, speed, and payload capabilities over their predecessors. (See Table I.) However, two functional limitations adversely affect even the newer aircraft. First, the centralized command and control of Soviet forces work at cross purposes with the enhanced versatility of newer model planes. While there are FA air directing officers (controllers) with Soviet ground forces, there

<u>Tactical Aircraft</u>	<u>First Year In Service</u>	<u>Combat Radius (Miles)</u>	<u>Maximum Speed (Mach)</u>	<u>Weapons Load Capacity (lbs.)</u>
Su-7 Fitter	1959	200-300	1.6	5000
Mig-21 Fishbed D	1962	200-300	2	2000
Yak-28 Brewer	1964	200-300	2.2	3000-4000
Mig-21 Fishbed J	1970	300-400	1.7	2000
Mig 23-Flogger B	1971	300-400	2.3	4400
Mid 27 Flogger D	1973	400-500	1.75	4400
Su-17 Filter C/D	1971/76	300-400	1.7	7000
Su-24 Fencer	1975	500-600	2	

Medium-Range Bombers

Tu-16 Badger	1955	1500	.8	20,000
Tu-22 Blinder	1962	1500	1.5	12,000
Tu-26 Backfire	1974	2500	2.5	10,000

Notes:

1. This is a revision and update of a chart that appeared in my "Soviet Power Projection: Soviet Capabilities for the 1980's," Naval War College Review, Vol. XXXII, No. 5 (September-October 1980), p. 34. As a result of new information, the radii of some aircraft (particularly the Fencer) have been lower. This does not affect the arguments made in the earlier article. In fact, it further substantiates them.
2. Combat radii are for flight profile of hi-lo-hi and no external fuel tanks. If aircraft were forced to fly lo-lo-lo, combat radii would be reduced by as much as 50 percent.
3. The Fencer's combat radii is where one sees the most disagreement. The estimates range between 200-1000 plus miles, varying assumptions on mission profile and weapons load as well as limited information accounts for the difference in estimates.

Sources: Robert P. Berman, Soviet Air Power in Transition (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institute, 1978), pp. 30-32; Jane's All the World's Aircraft, 1979-80 (New York: Franklin Watts, 1979); International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1980-1981 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1980), p. 91; John M. Collins, U.S.-Soviet Military Balance Concepts and Capabilities, 1960-1980 (New York: McGraw-Hill Publications Co., 1980), p. 496; and Gregory Trevorton, Nuclear Weapons in Europe, Adelphi Papers No. 168 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981), p. 32.

Table I. Ranges of Selected Soviet Aircraft.

are no dedicated air controllers as with US units. Air support missions are usually limited to those specified in a preplanned schedule. As a result, Soviet tactical aircraft lack the flexibility to respond to the tactical and dynamic changes occurring on a battlefield. In many instances, one can view FA as being primarily used to extend the range of Soviet artillery but having a limited capability to perform what US military personnel would consider close air support functions.¹⁶ Second, as Table I indicates, Soviet tactical aircraft have limited combat radii. This problem is further exacerbated because FA planes are not air-refuelable. As a result, in many instances, the USSR must depend upon ships to move aircraft overseas.¹⁷

Naval Forces. Soviet naval expansion has probably generated more discussion and concern about the Kremlin's worldwide aspirations than any other single military development over the last 20 years. The Soviet navy has changed from primarily a coastal defense force to a navy that is globally deployed. While in 1968 most observers could have agreed with Robert Herrick's assessment that the Soviet navy had primarily a defensive mission, no such consensus exists today.¹⁸

Two primary factors cause the greatest concern. First is the size of the Soviet navy. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the USSR currently deploys 289 ocean-going surface combatants and 189 attack, 68 cruise missile and 87 strategic nuclear ballistic submarines.¹⁹ This fleet is supported by a civilian merchant fleet that performs many military logistic functions. Second, Soviet warships now are regularly deployed in areas where they traditionally never sailed.

In the case of Southwest Asia, the Soviets regularly have deployed naval forces to the Indian Ocean since 1969. Normally, this squadron has comprised 20 ships of which approximately 4-5 have been combatants. However, during times of crisis (e.g., the 1971 Indian-Pakistan War, 1973 Middle East War, Ethiopia-Somalia conflict, the 1979 Iranian Revolution and hostage crisis, and the Afghanistan invasion), the USSR has augmented this force to demonstrate its intent to defend Soviet interests in the region. In the event of a military crisis in Southwest Asia, the Indian Ocean Squadron, supplemented with forces from the Pacific Fleet and possibly the Northern Fleet, would present the immediate Soviet naval threat in the Southwest Asian region.

Threat assessment is an important part of strategic assessment. A critical task of any threat assessment is a consideration of the static factors just examined. But evaluations of threats must consider more than just the numbers game. As Kenneth Booth has aptly argued, "Man cannot live by the Military Balance alone."²⁰ The ability to convert quantitative static military factors into usable military power is affected by geography, distance, force structure and risk considerations. In the Soviet case, each of these factors negatively impinges on what at first glance might appear to be significant quantitative Soviet advantages.

Geography. Geography is a major constraint upon military operations and strategy. According to Theodore Ropp, "Geography is the bones of strategy; the terrain and lines of communication have governed the course of many campaigns."²¹ Geography facilitated Switzerland's neutralism while every other country around it was engulfed in war. Conversely, geography and location are major reasons why Poland has been partitioned and destroyed every time a military conflict occurred in Europe. Geography can be overcome, as Hannibal did when he used the best technology of his era to cross the Alps. However, geography is a constraint that can be overlooked only at some peril.

In Southwest Asia, the rough, rugged and widely varying Iranian geography poses the most immediate military problems for a nation like the Soviet Union, which is inordinately dependent upon tank and mechanized divisions with little organic logistical support. Iran is divided into three major geographic areas: a mountainous rimland, including the Elburz and Zagros Mountains; Daste-Lut and Kashet-e Kavir Deserts; and the interior central plain. The mountainous rimland, which covers about 50 percent of Iran, is unfavorable to conventional military operations. As we have witnessed in Afghanistan, air-mobile operations are limited when helicopters must operate in high mountains and narrow, steep-walled valleys. Mobility for armored vehicles in the Elburz and Zagros Mountains is generally limited to hard-surfaced roads. When tracked vehicles are forced to depart from these roads, the mobility and speed of any Soviet military operation would be slowed considerably. If Soviet operations in Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan are any indication of Soviet techniques, Soviet units are not inclined to depart far from established roads, even when that is possible. Military operations in desert areas would be

extremely difficult because of limited logistic and maintenance facilities and the lack of water. The Kavir has a few water sources but the Lut is essentially barren, supporting life only on its most extreme periphery making military operations in either area extremely hazardous. The most suitable areas for military operations in Iran, including airborne and air-mobile, are the highland plains between the mountains and southwest lowlands on the Iran-Iraq border near the oilfields.

The limited transportation network in Iran is another constraint upon military operations. In the mountainous regions, roads and railroads cross numerous bridges and tunnels that could be destroyed either by conventional or guerrilla forces. There are more than 300 major chokepoints in Iran. Given the lack of redundancy in the road network Soviet units would have to repair destroyed roads and bridges before continuing military operations. The USSR has significant bridging capabilities, but those are primarily tactical bridges for crossing the numerous rivers and streams found in Europe. As a result, they would be of little utility in Iran's or Pakistan's mountain passes. Suffice it to say, road interdiction would have more impact in a country like Iran than it would in Europe, where an extensive road and rail network would allow a relatively easy redirection of forces. In addition, the steep inclines of existing roads would slow movement of armored and mechanized vehicles, making it difficult for the Soviets to achieve their desired movement times. For example, in the Elburz Mountains, it is not uncommon for vehicles going from the Caspian Sea to Teheran to climb from sea level to 12,000 feet and then to descend again to nearly 4,000 feet within 50 miles.²² In Afghanistan, rebel forces have been able to destroy similar mountain roads and passes leading from the USSR to Kabul so frequently that Moscow has "had to airlift food supplies, as well as ammunition, petroleum oil and lubricants."²³ A conservative Soviet planner would have to consider that this would also occur during any invasion of Iran.

The best months for military operations in Iran are from May to October. These are also the hottest periods, with temperatures in parts of Iran reaching as high as 120-130 degrees Fahrenheit. Without adequate water supplies, the operating capabilities of men and equipment would be seriously debilitated. While there are adequate water supplies in the northwestern and western areas of

Iran, water is scarce and brackish in most other regions, suggesting that Soviet deemphasis upon organic logistic units could be a hindrance to military operations.

In sum, the geography and terrain in Iran would make military operations torturous for both the USSR and the United States. However, tactically, the terrain favors the defense rather than the offense. High mountains and deserts are natural barriers that both regular and irregular forces could exploit. Numerous chokepoints and few roads will slow Soviet movement, even if there is only minimal opposition.

Before we end the discussion of geography, it is necessary to examine briefly the typical worst-case scenario for Southwest Asia—a limited Soviet attack to take Azerbaijan—and recognize that Soviet advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. All of the geographic constraints mentioned above would affect a limited Soviet attack. Iranian forces could harass and interdict Soviet supply lines stretching across the Elburz Mountains, making any invasion a costly venture. Even with its military forces in disarray as a result of the Iranian Revolution and the war with Iraq, it is still reasonable to expect that Iranian guerrillas and regular forces could inflict greater damage on Soviet units than have the disorganized Afghan rebels. Nevertheless, if the Soviets were determined to take Azerbaijan, and Teheran would not provide the United States with preconflict access to military facilities, there seem to be few military reasons why Moscow could not ultimately successfully attack Iran's northern provinces—albeit with some problems. Distance factors would favor Soviet forces and conversely constrain available US military options. On the other hand, for other scenarios distance considerations may act as more of a constraint upon Soviet military operations in Southwest Asia.

Distance. Distance is another major constraint upon military strategy and operations that analysts must consider. In the West, we tend to concentrate on the 7,000 mile air lines of communication and 12,000 mile sea lines of communication that the United States would have to maintain to fight a war in Southwest Asia and rightfully worry about US capabilities. From a Soviet perspective, however, the distance factors they face for military operations in the region are also significant, even if often overlooked by Western analysts. For example, from Kirovabad, it is 800 straight line miles to the headwaters of the Persian Gulf; nearly 1,200 miles to Gulf of

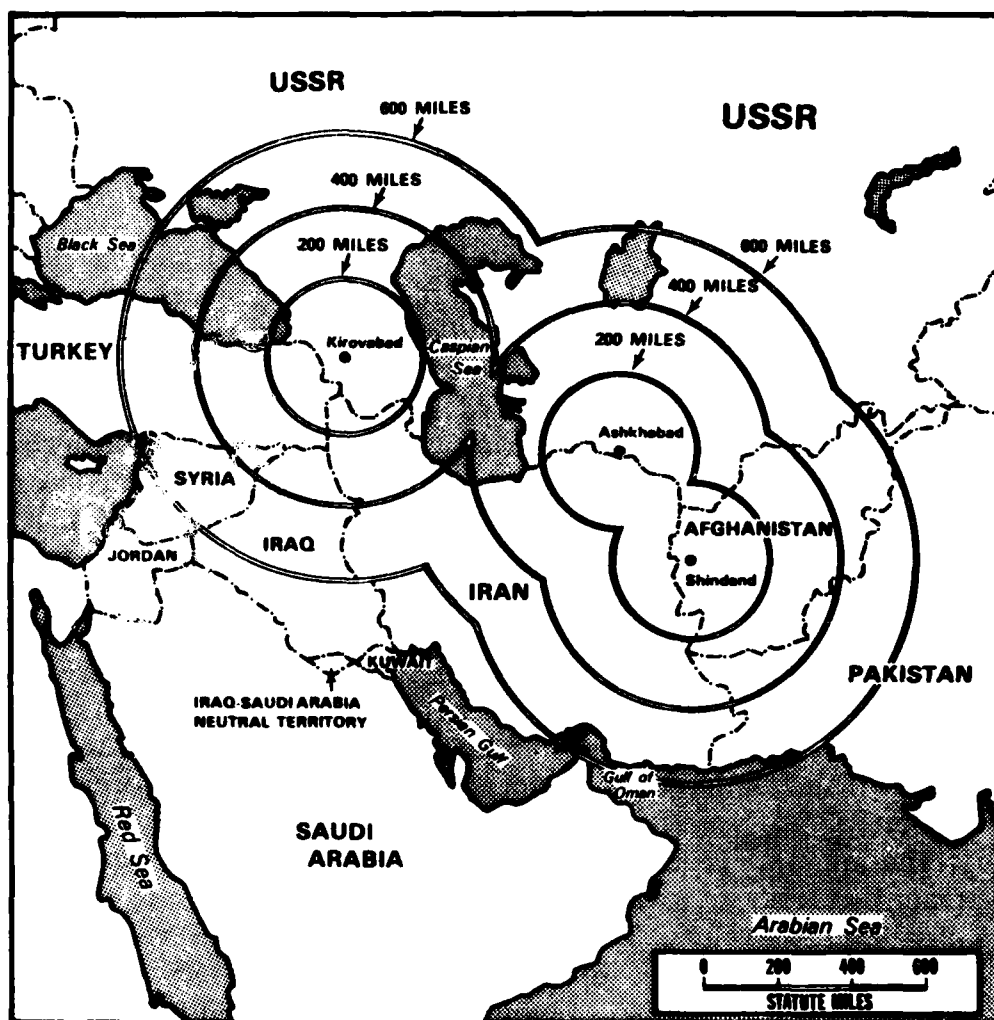


Figure 1. Distance from Selected Available Soviet Airbases.

Hormuz; 1,000 miles to Ras Tanura; and nearly 2,000 miles to Aden. While these are admittedly shorter distances than US strategists must contemplate, Soviet capabilities to operate over those distances are difficult and to some degree constrained by performance capabilities of their equipment.

The combination of limited combat radii and no in-flight refueling capabilities for FA aircraft keeps Soviet tactical planes from being able to support many military operations from bases in the USSR. (See Table I and Figure 1.) Medium range bombers operating from the USSR can strike targets throughout Iran,

Pakistan, and much of Saudi Arabia. However, they would have to fly without protective tactical air cover making them vulnerable to interdiction. Similarly, Soviet military transportation aircraft (VTA) would have to fly without tactical air protection to support a nation like the PDRY if it became engaged in a regional war with Saudi Arabia. Moscow has taken such actions when it supported Angola and Ethiopia, but those were benign environments where the threat to Soviet aircraft was virtually nonexistent. This would not be the case for Soviet military operations in Southwest Asia.

As others have pointed out, Soviet forces in Afghanistan have reduced some Soviet distance problems. From the nearest air bases in Afghanistan, Soviet planes are now only 500-550 miles from the Strait of Hormuz which gives the USSR the capability for the first time to cover military targets in the Strait.²⁴ But, to keep this issue in some perspective two caveats need to be made. First, not all Soviet tactical planes can do the job, which some observers conveniently forget. The *Fencer* can cover the required distances from Afghanistan, but it would be stretching its capabilities. If Soviet planes were required to take evasive routing or to fly low profiles for most of the route for fear of interdiction by Iran, Pakistan, or US carrier based aircraft, they would not be able to strike the Strait.²⁵ Second, assuming that any major Soviet military move against Iran would come from the Transcaucasus military district down the World War II Persian Corridor because this is both the best military avenue of approach and location of the main economic, political, and military centers, Soviet tactical aircraft from Afghanistan could not support those operations.

Distance as a constraint also applies to Soviet naval operations in the Indian Ocean. The majority of vessels for the Indian Ocean squadron come from the Soviet Pacific Fleet. This means that the Soviets must maintain a 7,000 mile sea line of communication that traverses three critical chokepoints. With a cruising speed of 18 knots, it would take the Soviet navy 18 days to deploy ships from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean. Deployments from the Northern Fleet via the Atlantic and the Cape of Good Hope—a distance of 14,000 miles—would take more than 35 days.

After the Egyptians opened the Suez Canal in 1975, some observers believed that this would significantly reduce Soviet resupply and redeployment problems for an Indian Ocean contingency.²⁶ All currently deployed Soviet vessels, including the

Kiev aircraft carrier, can pass through the Suez Canal. However, if the current state of relations between the United States and Egypt continues to exist, it would seem very unlikely that a conservative Kremlin military planner would risk sending naval vessels through the canal in the event of a military conflict in Southwest Asia. If this assumption is accurate, deployments from the Mediterranean Squadron or the Black Sea Fleet would have to travel approximately 11,000 miles, taking nearly 30 days to reinforce the Indian Ocean Squadron.

In addition, Soviet naval staying power and war-fighting potential in the Indian Ocean is limited. Admiral Gorshkov has argued for a globally deployed navy and has achieved marked success in procuring funds from a defense establishment that is dominated by army and continental-thinking officers. Nevertheless, Soviet ability to support sustained naval operations at the distances involved in the Indian Ocean is quite constrained and will be throughout the 1980's and 1990's. This assessment is based upon three factors other than the normally cited long sea lines of communication and lack of land-based air support for naval operations.

First, there is a lack of modern replenishment and fleet support ships in the Soviet navy. The first *Boris Chilikin* fleet replenishment ships (for the transfer of stores, oils, ammunition, and spares) entered the Soviet navy in 1971; there are only six in the inventory currently. A new more versatile fleet oiler, the *Berezhina*, entered the Soviet inventory in 1978. While both of these vessels are significant additions to the Soviet fleet, construction has been much slower than originally expected. For example, there is still only one *Berezhina* in the inventory, despite the fact that construction on the new oiler began in 1973 and was completed in 1975. At current rates of construction, the Soviets could have not more than 20-22 *Boris Chilikin* ships by the end of the 1990's. While both of these vessels will improve Soviet capabilities and have sparked enormous concern in Western naval circles, without major changes in construction rates the current low ratio of fleet support ships to combatants will continue to limit Soviet power projection capabilities for the foreseeable future.

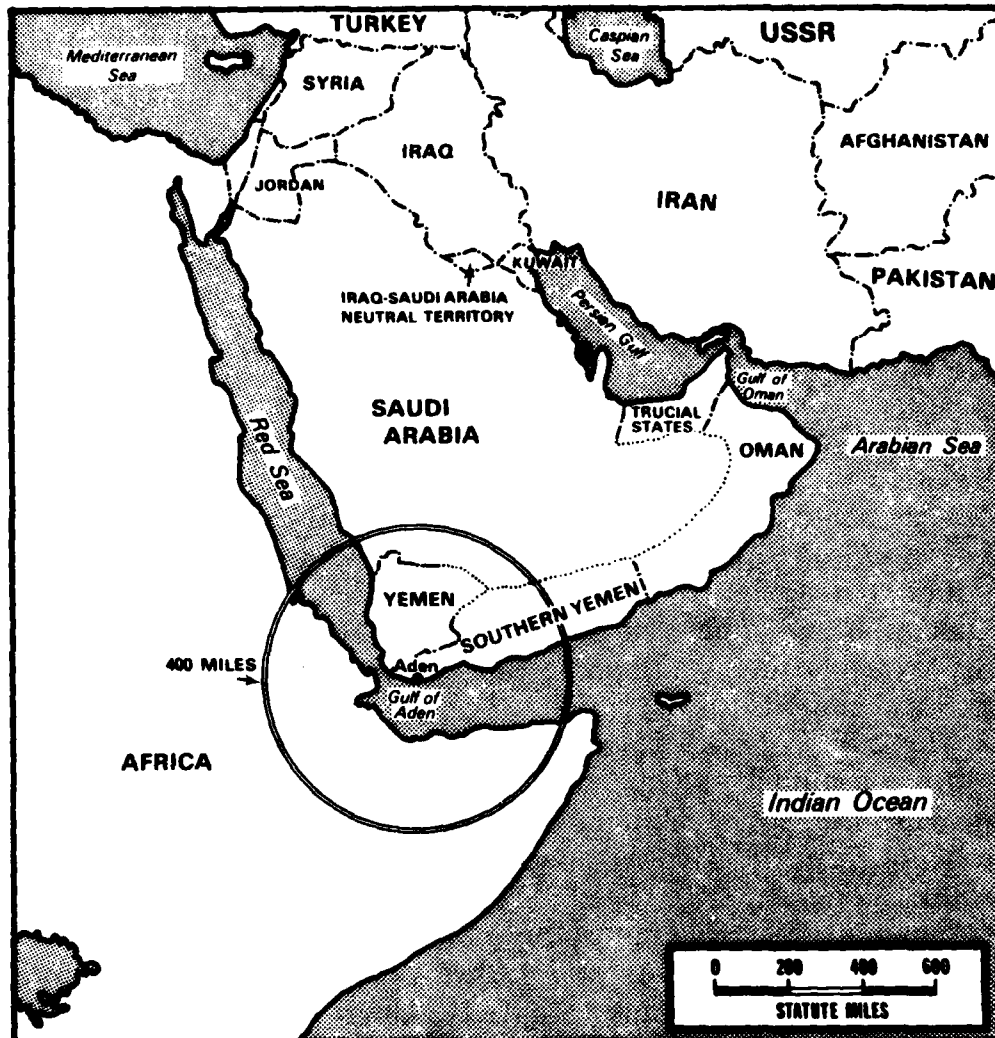
Second, Soviet techniques for at-sea replenishment and resupply are antiquated by US and other standards. In part, this is a function of few fast logistic ships. In addition, the Soviet navy does

not practice in peacetime the kinds of tactics that would be necessary in conflict. When the US Navy undertakes at-sea replenishment, it attempts to complete the job as rapidly as possible, usually with ships under way at speeds of approximately 12 knots or more. Moreover, even in peacetime, US ships are deployed to protect and screen the vessels being resupplied from hostile attack. The Soviets however, seldom undertake any such actions. At-sea replenishments usually take place when ships are dead in the water or barely moving. Very little, if any, defensive screening occurs.²⁷

Third, some observers believe that in recent years Moscow successfully has pursued a goal to acquire strategically-located bases on the periphery of the Indian Ocean. From these "bases," Soviets could use air and sea assets to sever the oil route from the Persian Gulf to Europe, United States, and Japan.²⁸ There is no doubt that access to facilities such as Aden, Socotra, Massawa, Dahlak Island, and Umm Qasr has facilitated Soviet peacetime deployments to the Indian Ocean and has resulted in numerous political benefits for the USSR.

The utility of such bases during a conflict in Southwest Asia is more questionable. On one hand, Massawa and Dahlak Island provide the Soviet Union with the ability to "intercept traffic moving from the Mediterranean Sea through the Suez Canal and south along the Red Sea."²⁹ On the other hand, any Soviet combatants operating out of those facilities could be intercepted by the French at Djibouti and rather easily bottled in narrowly confined areas by mining. Similarly, Umm Qasr, situated at the headwaters of the Persian Gulf, is a good position to show the Soviet flag but it is poorly located for support of combat operations.

The lone exception of military utility may be the Soviet facilities at Aden. Figure 2 shows that tactical aircraft flying from Aden would lack sufficient range to strike major targets in Saudi Arabia but they would provide significant coverage of Somalia, including Berbera and Djibouti. In addition, access to Aden has allowed the Soviets to fly ASW missions into the Indian Ocean. If these operations were allowed to continue during a Southwest Asia conflict, they could adversely affect US military operations in the area.



NOTE: The distance is calculated for available aircraft in the PDRY's inventory. If the Soviet Union provided more capable aircraft, which is unlikely, the ranges could be extended to 600 miles.

Figure 2. Maximum Radius for PDRY Attack Planes.

Finally, distance factors affect how the USSR could plan to use its airborne and naval infantry forces to support ground operations in Southwest Asia. It is generally assumed that, if required, VTA has the air assets to lift, at one time, all the combat elements of one airborne division or the maneuver elements (six regiments) of two airborne divisions within a combat radius of somewhat less than 1,000 nautical miles. Put simply, there are many areas in Southwest Asia where Moscow would have difficulty inserting airborne forces in any rapid fashion.

The effect of distance on the employment of Soviet naval infantry may be even more significant, however. Naval infantry tactics and doctrine indicate that these forces are supposed to be used as shock troops or as the spearhead for an assault when ground force units will soon relieve them. In contrast to its US counterpart, Soviet navy infantry forces have very little staying power or organic firepower. If a naval infantry regiment were committed to battle, it would have to be reinforced within 4 to 5 days. Assuming a 50-kilometer-a-day march time for Soviet ground forces (probably overly optimistic in the Iranian mountains), it would take them nearly two weeks to meet naval infantry units in southern Iran. All of this suggests that it is unlikely that Soviet naval infantry units would be used in amphibious operations in the Persian Gulf, even though small numbers of these forces have been observed on ships in the Indian Ocean. Similarly, given tactics, doctrine, and distances involved, it is not likely that naval infantry forces could be used effectively to support a client (e.g., PDRY) in its attack upon a neighbor (e.g., Saudi Arabia). New amphibious ships have enhanced Soviet lift capabilities. Nevertheless, it still appears that the naval infantry is not designed to be used as a Third World intervention force but is primarily focused, according to the Defense Intelligence Agency, "upon the waters contiguous to the USSR and the Warsaw Pact."³⁰

Risk. There is a natural tendency for American defense planners to concentrate on the Southwest Asian contingencies in terms of the Soviet-US balance and to worry if the United States will obtain support from regional nations. Those constraints are real, and it is not certain that the United States will be able to create the anti-Soviet coalition within Southwest Asia that it would like to see. Regional states are concerned about regional issues, and they see an influx of American forces as creating more problems than it would solve. However, the situation is no better for the Soviets.

The lack of reliable Soviet clients in the region is a major military, as well as political, constraint upon Soviet actions in the region. As Alvin Rubinstein has argued, "with the possible exception of the PDRY, none of the countries of the region wants to see a consolidated Soviet presence."³¹ In the event of some military crisis in the region—whether or not initiated by the Soviets—Moscow could depend upon access to military facilities from only two regional states: PDRY and Afghanistan. However,

the latter is "reliable" only as long as Soviet forces remain in Afghanistan; that in its own right is a constraint. Given their past record, the other states of the area would have to be considered either "hostile" or "questionable" from a Soviet perspective.

Table II provides an assessment of the regional military forces and their affiliations or tendencies to lean toward the United States or USSR. There are obvious weaknesses in such a graphic portrayal of the military balance. First, in a real world situation, how Southwest Asian nations would react would depend upon preconflict imponderables, and how the particular military situation evolved. Second, military capabilities of regional states vary widely. Some states have antiquated military equipment. Others, like Saudi Arabia and Iraq, have some of the most sophisticated equipment that money can buy. In each case, however, there is serious doubt as to whether Iraq or Saudi Arabia can maintain their equipment in a modern military conflict. Some nations of the region have been involved in military conflicts in recent years, while others have no recent conflict experience. Despite these problems, such a display of the regional military balance serves one important function. If one views the Southwest Asian military balance through Soviet eyes, it is not hard to imagine how a Soviet defense planner could reach the conclusion that it is the United States, not the USSR, that has more political room to maneuver in this area and, as a result, better opportunities to swing the total military balance in its favor.

In addition, with French forces in Djibouti and British and Australian naval forces in the Indian Ocean, Moscow faces the risk that any actions in the region could not be localized. Whether it wants to or not, any Soviet military actions can draw extraregional nations other than the United States into the military conflict, further complicating the military equation and Soviet military balance assessments. These are the sorts of risks Moscow has not been willing to take in the past. While numerous observers believe that the Soviet Union is now more brazen and willing to take military risks than at any time in the past, proof is difficult to find. For example, Afghanistan was a low risk military venture. The Soviets miscalculated in their abilities to bring that conflict to a rapid ending, but they were correct that no Western power had strong enough interests to oppose Moscow by force.

Regional Military Forces and Affiliations

<u>Inclined Toward West</u>	<u>Manpower</u>	<u>Paramilitary Forces</u>	<u>Medium Tanks</u>	<u>Combat Aircraft</u>
Saudi Arabia	47,000	26,500	380 ¹	136 ²
Oman	14,200	3,300	0	38
United Arab Emirates	25,150		3	52
Qatar	4,700		24	4
Baharain	2,500	2,500	0	0
Kuwait	12,400	15,000	280	50
Pakistan	438,600	109,000	1000	256 ⁴
<u>Inclined Toward USSR</u>				
PDRY	23,800	15,00	375	111
Afghanistan ⁵	40,000	30,000	1200	160
<u>Uncertain</u>				
Iran ⁶	240,000	75,000	1735	445
Iraq	242,250	83,000	2750	332 ⁷
YAR	32,100	20,000	864	49 ⁸
Ethiopia	229,500	169,000	640	100
Somalia	61,550	29,500	140	33

Notes:

1. 420 medium tanks on order.
2. 60 F-15's on order.
3. 20 medium tanks on order
4. 32 Mirage 5's, 18 Mirage III's, and an uncertain number of F-16's.
5. Actual strength - probably much lower due to defections.
6. Pre-1979 figures; actual figures believed to be considerably less.
7. 150 Mig 23/25/27's and 60 Mirage's.
8. 30 Mig 21's and 5 Su 22's on order.

Sources: International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1980-1981 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1980); and Challenges for U.S. National Security? Assessing the Balance? Defense Spending and Conventional Forces, a preliminary report, part II, prepared by the Carnegie Panel on U.S. Security and the Future of Arms Control (Washington, D.C.: The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981), pp. 169-171.

Table II. Regional Military Forces and Affiliations.

The Kremlin has resorted both to the use and threatened use of military force in a variety of occasions in the post-World War II period. Nevertheless, it has done so only when it apparently believed that it could do so cheaply and with minimum risk to the Soviet Union and its most vital interests.³² If there are threads that tie such disparate recent events as Angola, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan, the answer probably cannot be found in some grand theories about Soviet drives for a warm water port or oil. Rather,

Stanley Hoffman was correct when he said that Soviet actions are explained by: "low risks, and opportunities provided by previous Western mistakes, defeats, or (as in Afghanistan) indifference."³³ The problem for the Soviets is that its invasion of Afghanistan has excited not only the United States but also regional nations. As a result, Moscow cannot plan that future military actions—particularly against Pakistan or Saudi Arabia—would be similarly low risk. Further Soviet incursions in Southwest Asia may bring the USSR into contact with US forces either in the region or, if that is not militarily possible, outside the region as the United States attempts to pressure Soviet "vulnerabilities."³⁴ The risk in either event is direct military conflict with the United States. In the nuclear area, that eventuality has always acted as a constraint upon Soviet actions, and this should continue for the foreseeable future, despite the counterclaims of some pundits.

CONCLUSION

No one really disagrees with the proposition that the United States needs to enhance its capabilities in Southwest Asia. How to accomplish that task is an issue of dispute. Focusing on Soviet constraints does not necessarily provide definitive answers to this important issue, but it does suggest some important caveats to keep in mind. First and most important, the Soviet Union faces a variety of constraints that impinge upon its military capabilities. While this may appear to be too self-evident to warrant mention, numerous assessments of potential Southwest Asian contingencies and scenarios do not take this fact into consideration. The United States is not involved in a competition with the Soviet Union where Moscow has all the advantages.

Second, there is a need for policymakers and analysts to disabuse themselves of worst case scenarios. As a recent Carnegie Endowment for International Peace study has concluded, "if American leaders focus on shortcomings in the worst case situations, like a Soviet move into northern Iran, they might end up believing that US forces could not do much at all militarily in the area, when the fact is these forces could do quite a bit."³⁵ Distance and Soviet force structure considerations indicate that the further Soviet forces must operate from their borders the more significant Soviet constraints are and the more vulnerable Soviet forces come to interdiction and disruption.

Third, we need to recognize that strategic warning will exist prior to any conflict in Southwest Asia. Whether we will act upon it is a major question. However, given the low readiness status of Soviet ground forces in the region, it is reasonable to expect that the United States could have sufficient strategic warning of a potential Soviet military excursion. The normal peacetime Soviet naval deployments in the area also suggest that Moscow believes that any conflict in the region would be preceded by a period of political crisis, when Moscow could align its naval forces. In other words, the United States will have time to react. This argues in favor of flexible naval and air forces near the region as "over the horizon" deterrents, which could be rapidly reinforced in the event of a crisis. It also suggests that intelligence capabilities must be given as much attention as US forces to ensure that Soviet mobilization will be observed quickly and reported accurately. If the United States would have ample strategic warning, there is less need for land-based forces in the region, forces that may create political problems for the host nation and contribute to the regional instability the United States wants to avoid.

Fourth, we need to recognize that the primary objective of US strategy in Southwest Asia must be deterrence. This is so not only because a direct military conflict in the area has a potential to spill over into other regions and escalate but also because obtaining a major US objective of maintaining the flow of oil depends upon deterrence. As John Collins and Clyde Mark have pointed out in theory (and the Iran-Iraq War has proved in reality), oil facilities are extremely vulnerable to military operations.³⁶ To fight to defend oil inherently means that not only will disruption occur but also it will be some time before the flow of oil can be resumed, even if the United States and its Arab partners could "win."

Fifth, many of the force structure and specific military equipment constraints that limit Soviet power projection capabilities can be solved. They are technological problems. It is not that difficult to build FA aircraft with longer ranges or air refueling capabilities. It is within Soviet abilities to design a navy that has staying power and war-fighting capabilities in the Indian Ocean and to be able to secure its long sea lines of communication. However, the Soviet Union cannot accomplish this overnight, and, as a result, the United States has some leadtime to offset them.

In the final analysis, the main constraint upon the Soviet Union in Southwest Asia is political. It involves a lack of friends and allies; a lack of guaranteed access to facilities; and a general dislike and distrust for not only the Soviet Union but also the Communist system. Therefore, the primary US response to the Soviet threat must continue to be essentially political, bolstered by military capabilities and not the reverse. It is important to reiterate a basic point made at the beginning of this essay. Over the next decade, the most likely threats to Southwest Asian security are coups, insurrections, instability within authoritarian and monarchical regimes, and revival of indigenous military rivalries that have no direct relationship to the USSR. The challenge for the United States is to ensure that the military actions it takes to deter the worst case—additional “Afghanistan style” invasions—do not create political opportunities that the Soviets can exploit.

ENDNOTES

1. In this paper Southwest Asia is used according to the Department of Defense's definition for the region: Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, and the Arabian Peninsula south of the northern border of Saudi Arabia.

2. For just a few examples, see: Jeffrey Record, *The Rapid Deployment Force and U.S. Military Intervention in the Persian Gulf*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Institute for Foreign Policy Analyses, Inc., 1981; Albert Wohlstetter, "Meeting the Threat in the Persian Gulf," *Survey*, Vol. 25, No. 2, Spring 1980, pp. 128-188; and Zalmay Khalilzad, *The Return of the Great Game: Superpower Rivalry and Domestic Turmoil in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey*, Discussion Paper No. 48, Santa Monica, California: California Seminar on International Security and Foreign Policy, September 1980.

3. Record, *The Rapid Deployment Force and U.S. Military Intervention in the Persian Gulf*, pp. 1 and 2.

4. A few exceptions to this consensus which are worthy of note are: *Challenges for U.S. National Security: Assessing the Balance: Defense Spending and Conventional Force*, a preliminary report Part II prepared by the Carnegie Panel on US Security and the Future of Arms Control, Washington: The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981; Shahram Chubin, "U.S. Security Interests in the Persian Gulf in the 1980's," *Daedalus*, Fall 1980, pp. 31-66; Christopher Van Hollen, "Don't Engulf the Gulf," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 5, Summer 1981, pp. 1064-1078; and Kenneth Waltz, "A Strategy for the Rapid Deployment Force," *International Security*, Vol. 5, No. 4, Spring 1981, pp. 49-73.

5. When discussing limitations upon the Soviet Union, my experience is that to avoid any misunderstandings it is important to clarify from the outset what one is trying not to say. I am *not* trying to argue that the constraints which will be highlighted are of such a nature as to paralyze Soviet leaders during the coming decade. The Soviets can initiate a variety of actions to offset, ameliorate, and even solve many of the constraints to be discussed. I am *not* attempting to make the argument that the Soviet Union is impotent in Southwest Asia. That is obviously not the case. The invasion of Afghanistan clearly indicates that the Soviets have extremely potent options available to them if they choose to exercise them.

6. Chubin, "U.S. Security Interests in the Persian Gulf in the 1980's," *Daedalus*, pp. 47 and 48.

7. Contrary to a popular assumption, which argues that change and instability are always good for the USSR and bad for the United States, Moscow does not view all destabilizing international trends as leading to positive benefits. For example, Soviet actions in Poland and Afghanistan—where the USSR has a vested interest and more influence than the West—rather clearly indicated that in specific instances it not only favors the status quo but also has acted to subvert change. Moreover, historically, Moscow has been quite willing to sacrifice local Communists and their interests for good relations with national regimes. For just a few examples of how Moscow does differentiate between destabilizing events which are not in its interests see John C. Campbell, "The Soviet Union and the Middle East: In the General Direction of the Persian Gulf," *Russian Review*, July 1970, pp. 248-253; and Walter Laqueur, *The Struggle for the Middle East: The Soviet Union and the Middle East 1958-1968*, Baltimore, Maryland: Pelican Books, 1972, pp. 192-212.

8. Herman F. Eilts, "Security Considerations in the Persian Gulf," *International Security*, Vol. 5, No. 4, Fall 1980, p. 4.

9. See M. Mikhaylov, "Rebuffing the Intrigues of Imperialism: The Afghan Revolution Has Entered a New State," *Izvestiya*, January 1, 1980, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: Soviet Union*, January 4, 1980, p. D8.

10. See Henry Trofimenko, "The Third World and the U.S.-Soviet Competition: A Soviet View," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 5, Summer 1981, pp. 1021-1040 for a particularly good presentation by one of the leading Soviet scholars on this point. See also author's "Soviet Involvement in the Third World: Implications of US Policy Assumptions" in *The Soviet Union in the Third World: Successes and Failures*, ed. by Robert H. Donaldson, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1981, pp. 414-416 for more detail of my views on this point.

11. For more information on Soviet objectives, see Eilts, "Security Considerations in the Persian Gulf," pp. 79-113; Chubin, "U.S. Security Interests in the Persian Gulf in the 1980's," pp. 45-50, US Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Soviet Policy and the United States Response on the Third World*, report prepared by Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 97th Congress, 1st Session, March 1981, pp. 27-41; and *Challenges for U.S. National Security: Assessing the Balance*, pp. 152-154.

12. Daniel S. Papp, "Nuclear Weapons and the Soviet World View," in *Soviet Armed Forces Review Annual*, Vol. 4, ed. by David R. Jones, Gulf Breeze, Florida: Academic International Press, 1980, pp. 345-347.

13. *Challenges for U.S. National Security: Assessing the Balance*, p. 155.

14. John M. Collins, *U.S.-Soviet Military Balance: Concepts and Capabilities, 1960-1980*, New York: McGraw Hill Publications Co., 1980, p. 213.

15. As should be obvious, data on Category III divisions and overall Soviet readiness is soft and open to large differences of interpretations. Often assumptions about the status of Soviet reservists and mobilization capabilities have significant impact on US threat perceptions. As a result, it is necessary—but not done enough—to emphasize how subjective our assessments must be. The following statement by Collins indicates how difficult it is for the layman to obtain a "feel" for Soviet military capabilities not only in Southwest Asia but also worldwide. "The U.S. intelligence community counted 65 Category III divisions in 1976. That total increased to 96 after analysts reevaluated readiness conditions, and reclassified 31 divisions formerly carried as Category II. DIA now lists 93." *Ibid.* See also Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power*, Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1981, p. 6.

16. Gary Streb, *Soviet Frontal Aviation*, student research report, Garmisch, Germany: US Army Russian Institute, June 1980.

17. John M. Collins and Anthony H. Cordesman, *Imbalance of Power: An Analysis of Shifting U.S.-Soviet Military Strengths*, San Rafael, California: Presidio Press, 1978, p. 142.

18. Robert W. Herrick, *Soviet Naval Strategies*, Annapolis, Maryland: US Naval Institute, 1968.

19. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1980-1981*, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1980, pp. 10-11.

20. Kenneth Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1979, p. 110.

21. Theodore Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, new rev. ed., New York: Collier Books, 1973, p. 5.
22. *Iran Almanac and Book of Facts*, 16th edition, Teheran: Echo of Iran, 1977, p. 65.
23. Francis Fukuyama, *The Future of the Soviet Role in Afghanistan: A Trip Report*, No. 1579-RC, Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation, September 1980, pp. 14-15.
24. Some studies have suggested that the Soviets are now only 350 miles from the Strait. That is true if one measures the distance from the nearest point in the Afghanistan-Iran border. However, since the closest major airbase is at Shindand, such assessments seem to have overly worst-cased the problem. For an example see "Afghanistan: The Soviet Quagmire," *The Heritage Foundation Backgrounds*, No. 101, October 25, 1979, p. 5.
25. According to *Janes' All the World's Aircraft, 1979-80*, New York: Franklin Watts, 1979, p. 208, a Fencer's combat radius on a lo-lo-lo profile is 200 miles.
26. William F. Hickman, "Soviet Naval Policy in the Indian Ocean," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, Vol. 105, No. 8, August 1979, p. 48.
27. See Donald C. Daniel, "Navy," in *Soviet Armed Forces Review Annual*, Vol. 2, p. 179.
28. For two good presentations of this thesis see Alvin J. Cottrell and Walter F. Hahn, *Naval Arms Race or Arms Control in the Indian Ocean? (Some Problems in Negotiating Limitations)*, Agenda Paper No. 9, New York: National Strategic Information Center, 1978; and Patrick Wall, ed., *The Southern Oceans and the Security of the Free World: New Studies in Global Strategy*, London: Stacey International, 1977.
29. Drew Middleton, "New Soviet Anchorage Reported in Ethiopian Isles in the Red Sea," *The New York Times*, October 1980, p. A6.
30. Richard Halloran, "Soviet Ships in Baltic Mass for Amphibious Games," *The New York Times*, August 5, 1981, p. A8. The recent exercise with the Syrians deserves attention and some concern. However, it still does not alter my belief that the naval infantry is primarily intended for immediate peripheral use (NATO, China, and possibly against Iran via Caspian Sea) and not distant intervention operations.
31. Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "The Soviet Union and the Arabian Peninsula," *The World Today*, Vol. 35, No. 11, November 1979, p. 452.
32. See Stephen S. Kaplan, ed., *Diplomacy of Power: Soviet Armed Forces as a Political Instrument*, Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1981.
33. Stanley Hoffman, "Muscle and Brains," *Foreign Policy*, No. 37, Winter, 1979-1980, p. 5.
34. Increasing this seems to be becoming a major element of the Reagan Administration strategy for dealing with the Soviets. In May 1981 Secretary of Defense tentatively outlined portions of this concept: "More and more it is apparent that we cannot and indeed should not rely exclusively on strategic forces and that we need a strong conventional capacity to counter conventional strength that may be deployed against us.
 "We have to be prepared to launch counteroffensives on other regions and to exploit the aggressors' weaknesses, wherever we might find them." See Richard Halloran, "Weinberger Tells of New Conventional Force Strategy," *The New York Times*, May 6, 1981, p. A10.

35. *Challenges for U.S. National Security: Assessing the Balance: Defense Spending*, p. 189.

36. See US Congress, House Committee on International Relations, *Oil Fields as Military Objectives: A Feasibility Study*, report prepared by Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 94th Congress, 1st Session, August 21, 1975. The main points of the argument can also be found in Collins, *U.S.-Soviet Military Balance, 1960-1980*, pp. 367-395.

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER ACN 81066	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. AD-A109	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER 669
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) SOVIET CONSTRAINTS IN SOUTHWEST ASIA: A MILITARY ANALYSIS		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Strategic Issues Research Memorandum
7. AUTHOR(s) Dr. Keith A. Dunn		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Strategic Studies Institute US Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013		9. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		12. REPORT DATE 7 December 1981
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 34
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) UNCLASSIFIED
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Soviet Union; Soviet constraints; Southwest Asia; Soviet power projection; political constraints.		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) This memorandum examines in a military context the factors which constrain Soviet military operations in Southwest Asia. The major drawbacks considered are the manner in which the Soviet Union has built its forces and how its force structure limits Soviet power projection capabilities; the impact of geography and weather upon armor-heavy military operations; the effect of distance consideration in Southwest Asia, given the performance capabilities of Soviet military equipment; and the political risks Moscow would have to expect if it initiates military operations in the mid-range. The author concludes that the		


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main constraint upon the Soviet Union in this area is political. It is a lack of friends and allies; a lack of assured access to facilities; and a general dislike not only for the USSR but the Communist system. Therefore, the primary US response to the Soviet threat must continue to be essentially political, bolstered by military capabilities.



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